

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 2221

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT SF
SUBJECT: SURVEY OF POLITICAL GROUPS IN SOWETO

1. SOWETO UBC LEADER LEONARD MOSALA, IN DISCUSSION WITH CON-
GENOFFS UPON HIS RELEASE FROM DETENTION, GAVE WIDE-RANGING
ANALYSIS OF PRESENT STATUS OF BLACK POLITICAL GROUPS.
MOSALA IS WELL INFORMED AND ARTICULATE, AND SHOWS KEEN
UNDERSTANDING OF PRESENT POLITICAL MOOD IN URBAN TOWNSHIPS.

2. CAUSE OF PRESENT VIOLENCE IN SOWETO (AND OTHER TOWNSHIPS)
IS POLITICAL VACUUM IN THAT NO GROUP EXISTS THAT EFFECTIVELY
SPEAKS FOR ALL BLACKS. HE IDENTIFIED FIVE PRINCIPAL GROUPS:
BLACK PEOPLES CONVENTION (BPC), STUDENTS REPRESENTATIVE
COUNCIL (SRC), URBAN BANTU COUNCIL (UBC), BLACK UNITY MOVE-
MENT (INKATHA), AND BLACK PARENTS ASSOCIATION (BPO). ALL
FIVE HAVE THEIR CONSTITUENCIES, WITH DIFFERING PROGNOSSES
SUCCESS IN CAPUTING MAJORITY SUPPORT.

(A) BPC - THE BPC HAS SUBSTANTIAL GRASS-ROOTS SUPPORT AMONGST
BOTH YOUNG AND ADULT DERIVING PRIMARILY FROM ITS EARLY STATUS
AS ADVOCATE OF BLACK RIGHTS. BECAUSE OF THIS STATUS, HOW-
EVER, THE SAG HAS INFILTRATED IT WITH INFORMERS AND, HENCE
THE ORGANIZATION IS INCAPABLE OF RADICAL ACTIVITY.

(B) SRC- THE SRC IS MOSTLY STUDENTS WHO, WHILE CONVICTED THEY
CAN TAKE ON THE WHITE ESTABLISHMENT BY MEANS OF FORCE, ARE
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DOOMED TO FAILURE AND, HENCE, DISENCHANMENT. VERY TIGHTLY

ORGANIZED, THE MAIN WEAKNESS IS THAT MOST OF THE STUDENTS EVENTUALLY MUST RETURN TO SCHOOL OR SOME KIND OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES AND, HENCE, WILL NOT BE ABLE TO AFFORD CONTINUED FULL TIME POLITICAL ACTIVITY. STUDENTS ARE ALSO DEPENDENT ON WHITE HANDOUTS, WHETHER FROM SOUTH AFRICAN GROUPS LIKE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OR EVENTUALLY WHITE GOVERNMENTS. IN THIS VEIN, STUDENTS ARE CONVINCED THAT THE SOVIET UNION OR CHINA WILL SUPPORT THEM WHILE THEIR PARENTS KNOW THAT THE STRUGGLE MUST COME FROM WITHIN.

(C) UBC - THE UBC IS DYING, IF NOT ALREADY DEAD. IT HAS LOST COMMUNITY SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF DAVID THEBAHALI WHOM MOSALA SUSPECTS AS BEING A FRONT MAN FOR OFFICIAL OF THE WEST RAND ADMINISTRATION BOARD. THE UBC IS PICTURED AS BEING A TOOL OF THE SAG AND, AS SUCH, HAS NO CREDIBILITY. YET MOSALA FEELS THAT ONLY A SUCCESSOR ORGANIZATION WITH NEAR AUTONOMOUS GOVERNING AUTHORITY OVER BLACK URBAN AREAS CAN CALM GROWING BLACK FRUSTRATIONS.

(D) BUM-INKATHA - INKATHA IS ZULU BASED AND ALSO THE CORE OF BUM, HENCE THE BLACK UNITY MOVEMENT CARRIES THE STIGMA OF BEING A STALKING HORSE FOR ZULU NATIONALISM. GATSHA BUTHELEZI IS WIDELY RESPECTED AMONGST ADULTS BUT PERHAPS TOO AMBITIOUS AND IS POSSIBLY THE ONLY LEADER ON THE HORIZON CAPABLE OF UNIFYING BLACK MOVEMENT. BUM COULD STAND A CHANCE OF REPRESENTING MODERATES DISCARDED THEBAHALI (THEBAHALI SUPPORTS BUM AND SERVES ON ITS STEERING GROUP) ALTHOUGH STUDENTS WILL NEVER SUPPORT IT.

(E) BPA - WHILE MANAS BUTHELEZI SEEMS TO HAVE CONFIDENCE OF THE STUDENTS, IN REALITY HE HAS NO POWER BASE FROM WHICH TO CLAIM LEADERSHIP. BPA WILL PROBABLY FADE AWAY ALTHOUGH MANAS BUTHELEZI MAY CONTINUE AS A SPOKESMAN.

3. MOSALA FEELS THAT POLITICALLY MATURE BLACKS REALIZE THAT AN ARMED STRUGGLE IS DOOMED TO FAILURE, THAT ANY SUCCESSFUL ADVANCEMENT OF BLACK RIGHTS MUST COME THROUGH EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS, OF WHICH FIRST STEP IS BLACK AUTONOMY IN TOWNSHIP AREAS. MOSALA IS CONVINCED THAT NEW RIGHTS FOR BLACKS IN TOWNSHIP AREAS WILL COME AND THEN FOCUS OF BLACK ACTIVISM
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WILL SHIFT TO ECONOMIC FRONT, WHERE BLACKS WILL SEEK GREATER ECONOMIC RIGHTS, INCLUDING ACCESS TO MANAGEMENT POSITIONS. MOSALA IS OF THE OPINION THAT BLACKS MUST EMULATE AFRIKANER PATTERN OF EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT WHEREBY THEY GRADUALLY TOOK OVER INCREASING ROLE IN ECONOMY, THEN ASSERTED THEMSELVES POLITICALLY. MOSALA BELIEVES CONTINUED US INVESTMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA VITAL TO THEIR HOPES FOR ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT IN THAT US FIRMS MAY TAKE LEADING ROLE IN LIBERAL POLICIES

TOWARDS BLACKS.

4. COMMENT: WHILE MOSALA IS MODERATE TO CONSERVATIVE IN OUTLOOK AS BEFITS HIS AGE (ABOUT 50), POLITICAL BACKGROUND (UBC MEMBER), AND ECONOMIC STATUS (RELATIVELY WELL-PAID IBM EMPLOYEE), HIS ESTIMATES OF SOWETO GROUPINGS ARE REASONABLY GOOD, ALLOWING FOR A PERSONAL BIAS AGAINST THEBAHALI AND A LESSER ONE AGAINST MANAS BUTHELEZI, WHOM HE REGARDS AS A LATE ARRIVAL WITHOUT HAVING PROPERLY EARNED POLITICAL SPURS. THEBAHALI HE RESENTS FOR HAVING CONVOKED RECENT UBC MEETINGS (WITHOUT HIM AND MLONZI), WHICH HE REGARDS AS ILLEGAL SINCE HIS OWN MOTION TO SUSPEND MEETINGS SINE DIE WAS CARRIED. MOSALA WILL BE RESIGNING FROM THE UBC. HIS OWN POLITICAL CAPITAL HAS BEEN AUGMENTED BY HIS RECENT IMPRISONMENT. JOHNSON

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